

in Michigan. In Indiana it is reported from Gibson county, in the southwestern part of the state, and the station at Whitings places it in the extreme northwestern part.

9. *E. intermedia* Schultes.—This species also was obtained with the two just mentioned. It has been noticed but once before in our vicinity, at Hyde Park. The stems are considerably shorter than those usually described, being but two to four inches long. They are spreading or declining, densely cespitose, many small bunches making a large, compound tuft. I do not find it reported for Indiana, though it is found in Michigan, northern Illinois, Iowa, and northward. *E. acicularis*, everywhere common, grew with the three species named above, and the four could sometimes be collected within the area of a square yard.

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### The plea of expediency.

N. L. BRITTON.

Inasmuch as Dr. Sereno Watson has in his last published words (BOTANICAL GAZETTE, June, 1892) defined his position and that of Dr. Gray, on the question of nomenclature, as one of expediency, it is desirable that this position be briefly examined.

It is very clear from the manner in which these botanists have illustrated their position in their writings, that it has been an individual rather than a general one. By this I mean that what has appeared to them "expedient" is the course which has been followed quite independently of what others may have so regarded, and it is this spirit which has led to all the antagonism which has been developed on the question of what specific name a plant should bear, as well as in many other questions during the last twenty-five years.

This epoch has been forcibly defined in a late issue of the GAZETTE (p. 164) as one of "a botanical aristocracy," during which there has been a good deal of "rank injustice done to both worthy but unknown, and known but underrated botanists." Coming from the source that this pungent statement does, from one who has been more closely identified with the



work of the "botanical aristocracy" than any one else,<sup>1</sup> it must be accorded the greatest weight as an indication of the thoughts that have been rather freely expressed in private, and which have done systematic botany no good. A proper consideration of the wishes and opinions of others would have served science immeasurably better and redounded to the credit of those who were so well equipped to facilitate the development of botany in America.

As to the maintainance of the oldest binomial, the principle which Dr. Watson avers has been followed, so many exceptions have been taken in Gray's Manual and Synoptical Flora, that we perceive the principle of expediency has been made to work both ways. I will not refer to these in detail at the present time, but they may be illustrated by such well-known species as *Jeffersonia diphylla* (L.) for which Barton's binomial of *J. binata* is much older; and *Eclipta alba* (L.) taken up instead of *E. procumbens* Michx. Quite a long list of these could be given to show that the "aristocracy" of the GAZETTE did not hesitate to abandon its own avowed principles when deemed expedient. Now with these facts before us, when the time came that two or three American botanists not controlled by the "aristocracy" were by nature impelled to think for themselves, there were about two courses open to them. The one was to accept the recommendations of the Paris Congress of 1867, and other representative deliberative bodies which had considered the nomenclature question, and decided that the earliest specific name should be maintained; the other was to follow what has been termed the "Kew rule" of maintaining the oldest binomial. It is not worth while to discuss here the merits of the two systems; that has been repeatedly done by adherents of each. We saw that the rule of 1867 had the support of more botanists of eminence than the other and it appealed to us as the proper course. Its very general acceptance outside of the "botanical aristocracy" during the last five years has I believe fully demonstrated the wisdom of our choice. The opinion of the leading spirit in the Paris Congress of 1867 does not accord with Dr. Watson's idea that this is not an *ex post facto* law. It would indeed be ridiculous to have it so.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Britton is of course at liberty to make his own use of this editorial. The editors, however, beg leave to dissent both from his imputation of it to any one of their number, and from his special application of it in the case under consideration.



For some reason which I am wholly at a loss to understand, Dr. Watson found it expedient to intimate that I have withheld from publication a letter on this matter written by Dr. Gray. The facts in this case are just these. Immediately before his fatal illness, Dr. Gray wrote me a long personal letter objecting to the course which I had taken in maintaining one of Walter's specific names, dating from 1788, which was cited in Dr. Watson's Bibliographical Index, as a synonym of one published by Torrey and Gray in 1840. The citation is made by Dr. Watson without any question being thrown upon the equivalency, and I supposed it to be true, but in this letter Dr. Gray threw doubt on it, and informed me of an earlier specific name by Linnæus, which I took up on the next occasion I had to refer to the species. Some time after Dr. Gray's death I was requested to send this letter back to Cambridge as the physicians attendant on Dr. Gray desired to have a study made of the hand-writing. This I immediately did. Later I was requested to allow the letter to remain at Cambridge and accept a copy of it in exchange. As the last writing of a distinguished botanist I naturally valued the document, but acceded to the request, and the original is not in my possession. The letter did not come to me as editor of the *Bulletin* of the Torrey Botanical Club, for I was not then editing that journal. I did not realize that it was intended for publication, and do not think that it was. At any rate under the circumstances stated above, I certainly never had any right to publish it after it had passed from my possession, and there was no principle enunciated in it which was not already well-known as being held by the writer.

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#### BRIEFER ARTICLES.

On *Amarantus crassipes*. (WITH PLATE XVII.)—Schlechtendal publishes the first description of this species in *Linnæa* vi (1831), p. 757. Schrader, in *Index Sem. hort. Goett.* (1835), described this plant as *Scleropus amarantoides*. Shortly afterwards Endlicher, in *Gen. Pl. Suppl.* (1836-1840) p. 1377, published a description of Schrader's genus. Moquin, in *DC. Prodr.* XIII, 2, (1849), p. 271, retained the generic name, but restored the first specific name. Dr. Gray, in *Proc.*